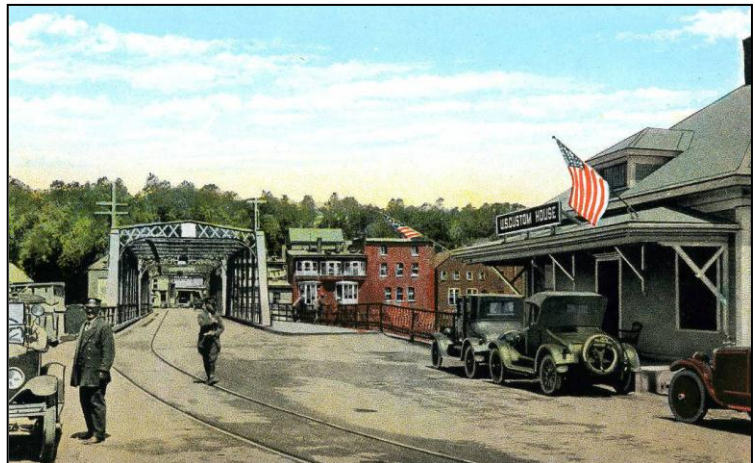


## A New Port of Entry for an Important Border Crossing...

### The Calais, Maine U.S. Inspection Station. Opened 1935.

Located in one of the earliest European settlements in North America, the Calais Land Port of Entry, in Calais, Washington County, Maine has long been a crossing point between Canada and the United States. Due to a combination of a lack of federal focus on land ports of entry and the natural boundary of the St. Croix River which helped control crossings in the Calais area, it was not until the 1930s that the United States government would construct a dedicated border crossing in Calais, Maine.

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both the United States Customs Service (Customs) and the United States Immigration Service (Immigration) were focused on activities at ocean ports in major cities. There were very few official ports of entry and it was the responsibility of the individual to report to the nearest customs or immigration office when they crossed the border. This led to a porous border with little control of who entered the United States. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a series of Federal laws and policy changes, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; the Immigration Act of 1891; the Immigration Act of 1921; the Volstead Act; and the establishment of the Border Patrol in 1924, led to an increased need for border stations in places like Calais. Initially, most Customs and Immigration activities were completed on the road or highway at the crossing point with administrative activities occurring in whatever space the government could find, including commercial buildings and private homes. With an increase in border operations, the Federal government began a program of constructing Customs and Immigration facilities all along the United States border.



Top: "U.S. Inspection Station, Calais, Maine," Drawing of Front Elevation, January 24, 1934. (Image courtesy of NARA)  
Bottom: Postcard showing U.S. Customs Operations in Calais, Maine, circa 1915. (Image courtesy of St. Croix Historical Society of Calais)

The Calais border crossing is located at the northern end of U.S. Highway 1, also known as Main Street. Customs operations in Calais began at this location in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early customs operations were housed at commercial building on Main Street and were later relocated to the post office, and eventually to an unknown building located near the eventual site selected for the Calais port of entry.

By the 1931, Calais, Maine was the seventh most active land port of entry in the United States. At that time, all examinations of automobiles and baggage were made at roadside and no shelter of any kind was extant. Roughly 18 Customs inspectors and 12 Immigration officers examined baggage and vehicles in public, regardless of weather conditions. The traffic often backed up nearly a quarter of a mile due to the large volume of traffic, 734,760 incoming automobiles with 973,339 persons from Canada and 865,045 Americans with approximately 200,000 bags in 1932.



*Above: Calais, Maine, circa 1931. (Image courtesy of NARA)*

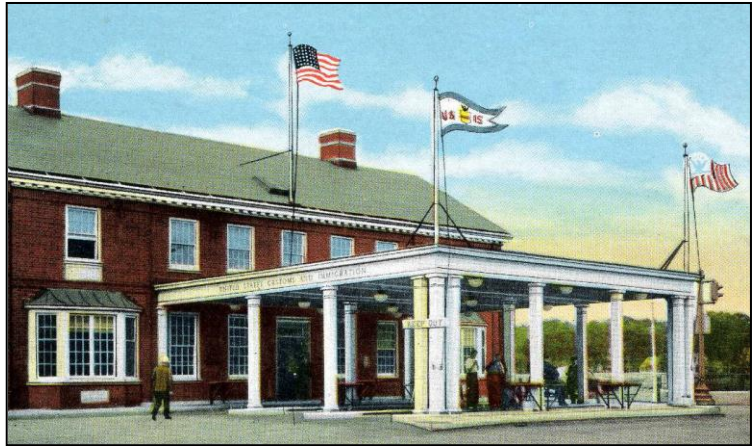
Based upon this heavy volume of traffic, in 1931 the 71<sup>st</sup> Congress appropriated \$59,000 for site purchase and construction of a new land port of entry at Calais. Provisions for the Calais LPOE were discussed at length in a 1933 hearing before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations due to concerns that insufficient funding had been appropriated for the facility. James A. Wetmore, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, personally requested an increase in the

appropriation from Congress, receiving \$110,000 with \$75,000 designated for construction and \$35,000 designated for the purchase of the site.

During this period, the Treasury Department typically based all ports of entry on one of six designated Plan Types. The selection of the Plan Type was based upon the traffic volume and available space at a border crossing. Originally, the new port of entry was to be a Plan Type 1, which consisted of a 2-story administrative building with a basement and several 1-story frame detached residences. However, a study conducted by the Customs and Immigration Service found that a Plan Type 3, which consisted of a 2-story administrative building with a basement and office quarters on the second floor, was more appropriate. The selection of the Plan Type was based upon the traffic volume and available space at a border crossing. While six plan types were eventually developed, only two are known to have been considered at Calais.

In January 1934, plans for the “U.S. Inspection Station, Calais, Maine” were finalized by the Public Works Branch, Procurement Division, Treasury Department, the primary architects for Federal buildings during this time. The final plans were for a complex consisting of an inspection station, a garage, parking areas, driveways, and landscaping, including flagpoles. The selected site placed River Street immediately to the south of the inspection station and a new concrete access road extended from Main Street between the sidewalk and the river to the rear of the facility.

At the time of its completion in 1935, the Calais port of entry was one of the finest and most imposing buildings in Calais. Typical for the period and Federal government architecture, the facility was designed in the Colonial Revival style. The grounds included a concrete driveway that was divided into three separate inspection lanes. Concrete sidewalks circled the perimeter of the building and connected the inspection station and garage.



*Above: Postcard showing U.S. Inspection Station, Calais, Maine, circa 1935. (Image courtesy of St. Croix Historical Society of Calais)*

The inspection station was the primary building of the complex. Built of brick masonry, the building had minimal exterior ornamentation limited to simple detailing at the corners and eaves. The multi-light, double-hung wood windows have concrete details at the top of the surround. A three bay vehicle inspection canopy supported by three tiers of wood columns projected from the inspection building over the driveway to provide shelter for Customs and Immigration inspections.

The inspection station's central hall plan used the central corridor and stairway to divide Customs and Immigration functions. The Customs portion of the building contained five rooms: a large divided public space with a counter and open work area; a private work room; an office; a vault; and an office for the Collector of Customs. The Immigrations portion of the building contained four rooms: a large divided public space with a counter and open work area; a private work room; an office; and an inspection room. The division of space continued on the second floor with two rooms for Customs: a large divided public space with a counter and open work area; and a payroll office; as well as three rooms for Immigration: an inspection room, a board room, and a patrol room. The second floor also contained an office for the Department of Agriculture's Animal Industry operations and restrooms. The basement contained mechanical, storage, and detention areas.

Also located on the facility was a large two-part, wood frame garage building located to the rear of the inspection station. The garage featured a center wall, with four bays located on either side. The southern bays were used by Customs and featured an inspection pit to facilitate operations. Access to these bays was from River Street. The northern bays were used by Immigration and were accessed by the new access road that connected to Main Street.

In 2004, U.S. Customs and Border Protection determined that the Calais port of entry was eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its associations with early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Federal efforts to address border control issues, such as illegal immigration and human trafficking. As a part of a new era of Federal customs and immigration laws, the Calais port of entry was part of a new system designed to address land immigration issues. It also served as an important symbol of the Federal government and its commitment to addressing and enforcing Customs and Immigration public policy and programs at both the local and national levels.



The Calais U.S. Inspection Station, known today as the Calais Land Port of Entry (LPOE), has been in continual use by the Federal government since it was opened in 1935. Over time the facility has had alterations and changes as technologies and times have changed, but it has remained much the same as when it was first constructed and continues to remain a busy crossing between the United States and Canada. Both the inspection station and garage remain in use and are vital assets to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.



*Above: Aerial View of Calais, Maine, circa 1940. The Calais port of entry is located below the bridge on the left hand side of Main Street. (Image courtesy of NARA)*

**Sources:** *Evaluation of Buildings & Structures at the Land Ports of Entry in Maine* (2007), Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] (Cartographic, Still Images, and Textual Records of RG 121); Limestone Public Library; and the St. Croix Historical Society of Calais.

**Purpose:** Developed by U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) in partial fulfillment of the terms of the 2012 *Memorandum of Agreement for the Construction of a Communications Tower and Associated Equipment at Calais Land Port of Entry in Calais, Washington County, Maine*. This document is intended for public education and is free for non-profit uses.